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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Results of the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note sets out the results, including decisions taken, of the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which were held in New York from 15 January to 2 February 2007 and from 14 May to 1 June 2007, respectively. The Committee's annual report, covering its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions (A/62/38), will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

* E/2007/100 and Corr.1.

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I. Introduction

1. Article 21, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly on its activities. The report of the Committee on its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session (A/62/38).

II. Results of the Committee's thirty-seventh session

2. The Committee held its thirty-seventh session from 15 January to 2 February 2007. The results of that session are contained in the note by the Secretary-General submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.1).

III. Results of the Committee's thirty-eighth session

3. The Committee held its thirty-eighth session from 14 May to 1 June 2007. At that session, the Committee adopted one decision and took action on items 5, 6 and 7 of its agenda (CEDAW/C/2007/II/1).

4. On 1 June 2007, the closing date of the thirty-eighth session, there were 185 States parties to the Convention. A total of 87 States parties had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol and 49 States had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

A. Reports considered by the Committee

5. The Committee considered the reports of eight States parties submitted under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All reports were initial reports, or combined initial and periodic reports, namely those of Mauritania (initial), Mozambique (combined initial and second periodic), Niger (combined initial and second periodic), Pakistan (combined initial, second and third periodic), Serbia (initial), Sierra Leone (combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic), Syrian Arab Republic (initial) and Vanuatu (combined initial, second and third periodic). The delegations of several reporting States were headed by Ministers and included representatives with specialized technical expertise. The reports, the Committee's lists of issues and questions, the replies of States parties and their introductory statements (where available electronically) are posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/38sess.htm).

6. The Committee adopted concluding comments with regard to each of the reporting States which are also available on the above-mentioned website.

B. Decision

7. The Committee will adopt a decision pertaining to the extension of its meeting time at its thirty-ninth session (23 July-10 August 2007) and will bring it to the attention of States parties. A statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the decision will be before the Committee at its thirty-ninth session.

C. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention

8. Members of the Committee's working group for a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention provided an update on the status of its work.

9. The Committee discussed a revised draft of a general recommendation on women migrant workers, submitted by its working group, and agreed on the next steps for its further revision.

D. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Informal meeting with States parties to the Convention

10. The Committee decided to invite States parties to an informal meeting at its thirty-ninth session, scheduled to take place from 23 July to 10 August. The meeting would take place in the third week of the session and would provide an opportunity to update States parties on the Committee's request for extension of meeting time; its efforts to encourage States parties to submit long-overdue initial reports; its work in parallel chambers; and other matters pertaining to its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Request for long overdue initial reports

11. The Committee reviewed the status of submission of reports by States parties (CEDAW/C/2007/I/2), as well as steps taken at its thirty-seventh session aimed at encouraging States parties to submit long overdue reports. The Committee proceeded in accordance with its decisions 29/I and 31/III (i), taking into consideration its previous experience in inviting two States parties, Cape Verde and Saint Lucia, to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports. The Committee noted that at its thirty-seventh session, it had requested four States parties that are more than 20 years overdue in submitting their initial report under article 18 of the Convention, i.e. Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia, to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by March 2008, for consideration at its forty-third session in 2009. The Committee agreed to request four more States parties with long overdue reports, i.e. Bahamas, the Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles, to submit their initial and all other outstanding periodic reports in a combined report by the end of 2008, for consideration by the Committee in early 2010. As a measure of last resort, failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested time frame, the Committee will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the four States parties in the absence of a report. The Committee also decided to send reminder letters to the following States parties: Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti and Tuvalu.

Harmonized reporting guidelines

12. The Committee continued to review its own reporting guidelines in the light of the harmonized guidelines on reporting under international human rights treaties (HRI/MC/2006/3). Based on the proposal of its working group, the Committee agreed to continue its work on the revisions at its thirty-ninth session with a view to their adoption.

United Nations reform

13. The Committee was briefed by, and engaged in an interactive dialogue with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, on matters pertaining to United Nations reform, in particular proposals regarding a new gender equality architecture.

Other matters

Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

14. The Committee agreed to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee on 23 July 2007, at the opening meeting of its thirty-ninth session. It extended an invitation to the Secretary-General to address the Committee on that occasion, as well as to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and a representative of a non-governmental organization.

E. Activities of the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention

15. The Committee continued to consider matters arising in conjunction with its work under the Optional Protocol, and adopted decision 10/2005, N.F.S. v. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It appointed two ad hoc rapporteurs for follow-up to its views in A.S. v. Hungary, 4/2004.

16. The Committee's Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol held an informal meeting on 4 and 5 June 2007 and registered communication 15/2007.